



Andy Flower, who is to leave the ECB after 12 years (Getty Images)

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Andy Flower: It's been a real privilege to be part of the England cricket set-up

The former England head coach is leaving after 12 years working with elite and emerging players. He became assistant coach in 2007, head coach in 2009 and since 2014 has been coach of the England Lions. Now he looks back at some of the highlights of his time working with elite and emerging players.

Not many Zimbabweans, as Andy Flower admits, get the chance to be involved in four Ashes series. With characteristic modesty, Flower neglects to add that this particular Zimbabwean won three of them.

Mind you, Flower himself says he doesn't see himself as a Zimbabwean coach any more after 12 years as an integral part of the England set-up.

"It's been a real privilege," says Flower, who was appointed assistant coach to Peter Moores in 2007, took over as head coach two years later and switched in 2014 to England Lions, working with "hungry young cricketers who have all their dreams ahead of them".

Before Flower moves on to new challenges, he looks back at his time with ECB and pays tribute to many people who worked alongside him in his various roles.

Memorable successes overseas stand out

One of the many successes for which Flower will be remembered is taking England to No.1 in the Test rankings in 2011. But there are particular victories that will live long in the memory.

"The Ashes victory in 2010-11 stands out," he says. "It's difficult to win in Australia and to do it so comprehensively was a really proud moment in my coaching career. It was wonderful to watch those young men take on that challenge successfully and have a great time doing it.

"The win in India in 2012-13 was a highlight too, to overcome some great players in tough spinning conditions was a special victory.

"So was the T20 World Cup win in 2010. The way we played our cricket, with such freedom and aggression, really was fun to be part of."

I'd like to thank...

Flower is generous in his gratitude to, and praise for, a host of people. They include Peter Moores, who gave him that first opportunity at England level, and Hugh Morris and Giles Clarke, the MD and Chairman of England cricket respectively, who made him head coach in 2009.

"When people place their trust in you like that it gives you a tremendous sense of confidence and I will always remember that".

Flower says it was a highlight to spend time with Graham Gooch, who invited him over as a player at Essex and later worked alongside him as England batting coach. Staff behind the scenes such as John Carr, Medha Laud and Phil Neale all get a mention too.

He adds: "I'd like to thank the captains I worked with longest, Alastair Cook and Andrew Strauss, for their commitment and friendship over the years.

"It's been a privilege to work with all the players. Sometimes, in high-pressure environments, as a coach and a mentor you hold a very responsible position.

"You end up sharing some really intimate moments – over a beer in the dressing room, working hard together in the nets, or listening to a personal problem and helping them work through that – and it's a privilege to be able to contribute and influence these young guys' lives."

Our superb supporters

Flower has special words of thanks for all English cricket fans. "We've just had a wonderful summer seeing amazing things on a cricket field and there's been such keen support for the game and the England team – it's really uplifting to be part of.

"As for the Barmy Army, what an amazing and special bunch of fans. Wherever you go in the world, however you are doing, whether you are thumping Australia in Adelaide or struggling against Bangladesh in Dhaka, they are singing with the same heart.

"That epitomises resilience and spirit and for an England player or staff member it's a lovely feeling to be supported in that way."

Strong backing for Silverwood

Chris Silverwood, the new England head coach, and Flower go back a long way. Flower was on the opposing side when Silverwood made his Test debut in Bulawayo in 1996, and the pair worked together with the Lions.

“I’m really happy for Chris that he’s getting the chance to lead England and I think he’s going to do a great job,” says Flower. “I also want to wish Mo Bobat, the new performance director, all the best in his new role.”

As for Flower, he is taking some time away from the game. “I haven’t had a sustained break for quite a long time,” he says. When he does return, it’s more likely to be in the world of franchise cricket than the international game.

Flower believes English cricket is stronger than it was 12 years ago, particularly financially. “We’re moving into an exciting phase of trying a new format,” he says. “England brought in T20 cricket and now we’re leading on the innovation front again and I really hope that is successful.

“I will still be based in England and I will continue to watch English cricket very keenly – it has a very bright future.”

Senior ECB figures pay tribute

Ashley Giles, managing director, England men’s cricket, says: “Andy moves on with every best wish from all of us at ECB for his outstanding contribution to the English game over the last 12 years.

“It has been a pleasure working with Andy, who sets such high standards of professionalism and preparation for the teams he leads. I have no doubt he will enjoy further success in the years to come.

Tom Harrison, chief executive of ECB, says: “Andy Flower leaves a legacy of extraordinary success aligned to his various roles at the ECB. He was instrumental in changing England men’s fortunes, particularly in the Test team, culminating in the ultimate achievement of the time, reaching the status ambition of becoming the No.1 ranked Test side in the world in 2011.

“During that time, under his leadership, England claimed the Ashes away in Australia and the T20 World Cup in 2010, the first time an England men’s team had won an ICC trophy of any kind. It is truly a record to be extremely proud of.

“Andy’s contribution has been immense and it has been a privilege to work with him. He leaves us with the sincere gratitude of all at ECB, and I am sure

that of all England Cricket fans too. We wish him our best for the future.”

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